

RESPONSE OF FLOWER TRADERS TOWARDS INFORMATION FLOW AND MARKETING SYSTEM IN FLOWER MARKET OF PURBA MEDINIPUR: A SURVEY IN KOLAGHAT FLOWER MARKET

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE

The main purpose of this survey is to know the opinion of traders of West Bengal on the issues related to Floriculture Information System. To understand the marketing system of flowers in the district of Purba Medinipur in West Bengal, the survey is conducted at Kolaghat Flower Market.

METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the purpose of the study, a survey was conducted to know the ground reality of flower traders of the Purba Medinipur district in West Bengal. Data was collected by means of interview and live recording.

FINDINGS

Findings are drawn based on analysis of gathered data in the survey. The data related to the marketing pattern of flower traders, information flow in the flower market, day to day business strategy of flower traders, exploiting role of intermediaries, poor infrastructural condition of flower market are collected and presented in this paper.

VALUE

This paper tries to present the current scenario of flower markets in West Bengal which is helpful to develop Floriculture Information System in West Bengal.

KEYWORDS: Floriculture, Flower Traders, Marketing System, Purba Medinipur, Flower Markets & Kolaghat Flower Market

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INTRODUCTION

Flower cultivation in Purba Medinipur District is an important field of modern agriculture. Though it is not the main crop of this district, but it has great importance in agricultural economy. In this district, floriculture is taking place of other crops gradually and its importance is increasing day by day. In West Bengal, the main flower producing districts are viz. Purba Medinipur, Nadia, Howrah, Darjeeling and North 24 PGS[7]. If the state scenario of flower cultivation is considered, it is seen that Purba Medinipur district ranks second only after Nadia district in terms of area devoted to flower cultivation. But in terms of amount of production of different flowers, Purba Medinipur district is a topper among all the districts in West Bengal. Purba Medinipur district with diverse agro-climatic condition, genetic diversity, and good soil texture and enough man power is placed in a very advantageous

position for producing different flowers[5]. Both types of flowers, traditional as well as cut flowers are cultivated in Purba Medinipur District of West Bengal. Traditional Flowers like Hibiscus, Beli, Sunflower, Rose, Lotus, Jasmine, Marigold, Tuberose etc. and Cut Flowers like Dutch Rose, Gerbera, Carnation, Crysanthemum, Gladiolus[1] etc. are cultivated in Purba Medinipur district. Panskura and Kolaghat region is one of the important flower producing zone in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal. A huge quantity of flowers is supplied to Calcutta every day from this zone as well as from different states of India. The paper highlights the present scenario of information flow and marketing system of the flower traders in flower market in the district of Purba Medinipur.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the marketing pattern and information flow in the flower market of this district.
- To identify the problems faced by the flower traders in this district.
- To highlight the scenario that floriculture is an emerging field of modern agriculture.
- To support for the development of a Model Information System for the purpose of providing relevant timely information to the flower traders.
- To highlight the exploiting role of middle man or aratdars in the business of floriculture.

Location Map of the Study Area

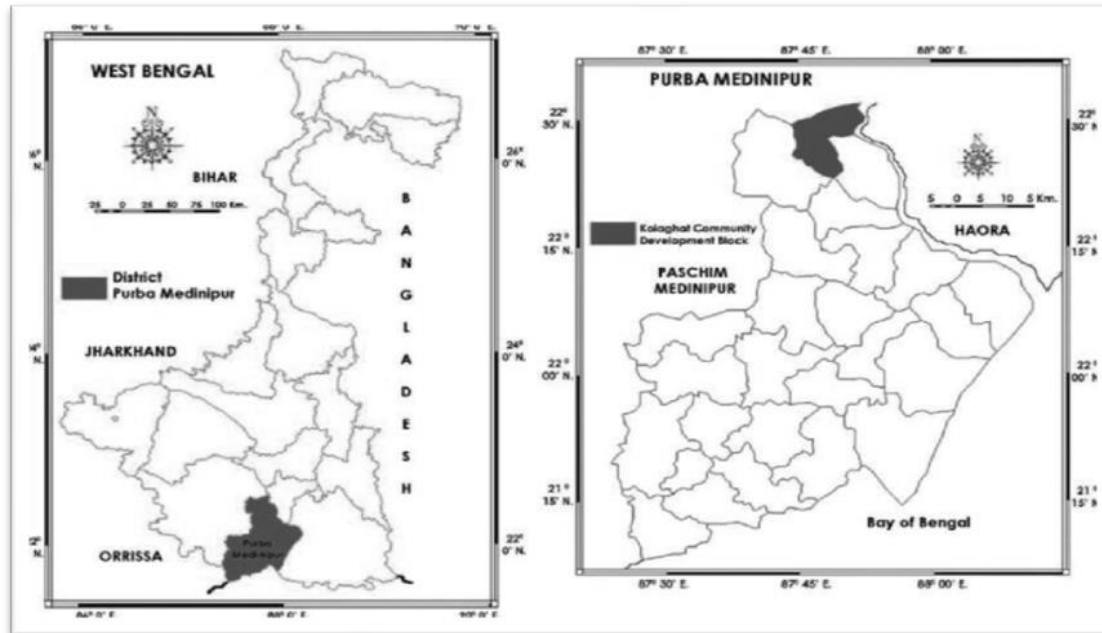


Figure 1: Showing Location Map of the Study Area.

FLOWER CULTIVATION IN PURBA MEDINIPUR DISTRICT

Purba Medinipur district is an administrative unit in Indian State of West Bengal. It was formed on 1st January, 2000 after the partition of Medinipur district into Purba Medinipur and Paschim Medinipur. The state of Odisha is at the south-west border; the Bay of Bengal lies in south; the Hooghly river and South 24 PGS district to the east; Howrah district to the

north-east and Paschim Medinipur to the west. There are 4 Sub-Divisions namely Tamluk, Haldia, Kanthi and Egra and 25 Blocks from the administrative point of view.

Flower has its own demand particularly in the urban cosmopolitan area for daily use - be it for religious occasion or social function or day to day use. To meet the demand of flower in our daily life, floriculture has been developed in Purba Medinipur as well as in West Bengal. It is also a profitable item than paddy or other crops. Floriculture has highly specialized and intensive form of agriculture in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal.

Both types of flowers, traditional as well as cut flowers are cultivated in Purba Medinipur District of West Bengal.

Traditional Flowers

Traditionally, flowers have been grown in India as well as West Bengal in the open fields, where they have been exposed to both biotic and abiotic stresses. Traditional flowers are offered in religious and social ceremonies, used as an adornment by women and offered for worships at home as well as in temples. e.g. Hibiscus, Beli, Sunflower, Rose, Lotus, Jasmine, Marigold, Tuberose etc.

Cut Flowers

Cut flowers can be grown in green houses, shade houses as well as in outdoor also. Environmental factors like water, temperature, light and other essential factors like manure, fertilizers etc. are either partially or entirely should be under strict control. e.g. Dutch Rose, Gerbera, Carnation, Chrysanthemum, Gladiolus etc.

Two Blocks are emerged as important flower growing region of this district i.e. Panskura and Kolaghat Block. The low river tract of Panskura and Kolaghat Blocks of Purba Medinipur is very much suitable for flower cultivation. Flower is mainly cultivated in almost every village of Panskura and Kolaghat Blocks[2]. The low river tract of Panskura and Kolaghat Blocks of Purba Medinipur is very much suitable for flower cultivation. The farmers in these blocks even elevate their agricultural land high by pouring soil in the lowland to make it suitable for flower cultivation. Gladiolus, rose, marigold, and chrysanthemum are produced in Naskardighi, Dharanda, Mysora, Kesapat, Janabad, North Polsa, Raniara, Sanktikri villages of Panskura Block and Siddha-I and Siddha-II, Brindabanchak, Bhogpur Gram Panchayats of Kolaghat Block. There is a marked difference in the variety of flower production in the Blocks. While Panskura specializes in rose, gladiolus, seasonal flowers like chrysanthemum, marigold but Kolaghat specializes in beli, juhi, hibiscus and sunflower.

DIFFERENT FACTORS THAT PROMOTE FLORICULTURE IN PURBA MEDINIPUR DISTRICT

Geographical and Climatic Factor

Purba Medinipur district is a part of lower Indo-Gangetic Plain and Eastern Coastal Plains. The Climate of this district is characterized by Hot-Summer with high humidity, abundant rainfall and moderate winter. Annual rainfall of this district is 2171 mm and average maximum temperature is 28o to 32o and average minimum temperature is 10o to 12o. Total area of the district is 4,736km². The vast expansion of land is formed of alluvial soil which is very fertile. The major crops grown in this district are paddy, pulse, oilseeds, vegetables, flowers, betel leaves etc[4].

Irrigational Factor

The district receives a handsome amount of average annual rainfall, but it is not enough for the cultivation. A large tract of the

district is under irrigational scheme. The district uses various types of tube wells for irrigating the agricultural area. High, Medium and Low capacity deep tube wells, shallow tube wells are the modes acquiring underground water for irrigation. Kolaghat Power Station has made the agricultural irrigation easy for the farmers. Depending upon the total amount of power produced in the plant, there has been variation in consumption of electricity for irrigation within the district.

Communication and Transport Factor

The district is well provided with means of communication. The district is well connected by Railways, Roadways as well as Waterways of transport. The main line of South Eastern Railway passes through the northern portion of the district from west to east connecting Kharagpur on the west to Kolkata on the east. The chief centres are Mecheda and Panskura. This railway enters the district at Kolaghat in the east and leaves at Haur in the west. This broad-gauge line connects Kolkata to Haldia and is bifurcated at Panskura.

The district has developed an excellent transport and communication network of highways - both National and State Highways. There are two National Highways (NH), which act as a major arterial network in the district. NH 6 connects Kolkata to Mumbai and passes through the district in the northern part. This highway is a part of the Golden Quadrilateral Project connecting all the four major cities of Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai in India. Another highway- NH 41 is connected to NH 6 at Kolaghat and is spread up to Haldia. Apart from the National Highways, State Highway 4 (SH) is connected between Kolaghat on NH 6 and Digha via Tamluk, Nandakumar and Contai. State Highway 5 connects Midnapore town via Egra and Contai up to Junput[8].

The district of Purba Medinipur is well connected with water transportation system to some parts of the State and also with rest of the country. Allahabad-Haldia waterway of river Ganga-Hooghly serves as the National Waterway number 1 which facilitates the easy movement of goods up to the Sagar islands located in the Sundarbans of South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. The district is well connected with South 24 Parganas district by ferry services on river Hooghly. Raichak of South 24 Parganas on the eastern side of Purba Medinipur is connected to Kukrahati which is situated near Haldia. Apart from Hooghly river, the district is well traversed by rivers Rupnarayan, Kasai, Haldi and Kaliaghai. All these rivers offer excellent intra district water transportation facilities.

Labour Factor

Purba Medinipur district is mainly a land of agriculture and more than 80% of the total population lives in the villages and engage in farming. The rural economy is based on agriculture and agro- based small industries.

FLOWER MARKETS IN PURBA MEDINIPUR DISTRICTS

There are several local small wholesale markets as well as large wholesale market for flowers that is situated in Purba Medinipur District.

Local Small Wholesale Markets

Gosainber, Mysora More, Keshapat, Kalibazar, Naskardighi flower mandi, Sagarbarh in Panskura Block.

Large Wholesale Markets

Deulia Bazar and Kolaghat Flower Market.

From the larger wholesale markets located at Deulia bazaar and Kolaghat Flower Market, the flowers are sent to

Mallickghat flower market of Kolkata. The flowers have a huge demand in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Ranchi, Bhubaneswar, Ahmedabad, Chennai and others. Apart from the national market, rose is sent to Holland, Europe and others during January and February.

KOLAGHAT FLOWER MARKET

To show the information flow and marketing system in flower market, Kolaghat Flower Market has been selected. The marketing pattern of the flower traders was studied by asking them to indicate the nature of marketing, which included how, where, when, to whom and through which channel they sell their flowers in the market. According to their statement, the following data is presented.

Kolaghat Flower Market is situated on the bank of the Rupnarayan river in Purba Medinipur of West Bengal under the Kolaghat Block of the Tamluk Subdivision. The famous flower market is located near down platform of Kolaghat Railway Station (platform No 1) on the bank of Rupnarayan River. According to Market Committee Member, the market was built in 1985 on the land of South-Eastern Railway. At present, approximately 1500 to 2000 flower traders, approximately 125 Aratdars or Middleman come to the market every day. There are nearly about 35 stalls of artificial flowers present in the market.

Starting as early as 3 o'clock in the morning, the market is crowded with sellers, vendors, buyers as well as middleman or aratdars till 12 o'clock. Different types of flowers i.e. traditional flowers like Marigold, Lotus, Hibiscus, Jasmine, Beli, Sunflower, Tube rose etc. and cut flowers like Rose, Gerbera, Carnation, Chrysanthemum, Gladiolus, Cockscomb etc., different types of flower garlands, bouquets, other material used in worship of god like Tulsi leaves, Bel Leaves, Ornamental grasses, Ferns, Ornamental plants, Casuarinas and Thuja leaves (locally called Jhau leaves) and artificial flowers are available in the market. The market area has an everlasting pleasant fragrance of flowers that fill the air and remains colourful throughout the day and is a sight to watch.

All the flower traders who come to sell their flowers to this market have to pay a fixed amount of money to the railway authority because the land of the market is a railway property. During the survey, a local flower trader states that, a man behalf of railway authority use to stand at the each entrance position of the market with coupon and collect 10 rupees from each and every flower traders who come to sell their flowers at the market.

Approximately 125 Middlemen or Aratdar regularly comes to the flower market. Their business strategy is different from the general traders. First of all, they have to buy a fixed place for their business from the railway authority in the market place. After buying the fixed place from the railway authority, they are granted to continue their business at that particular place. But every day, they have to pay a fixed amount to the railway authority for their day to day business. During the survey, a middleman or aratdar states that he bought a place measuring 4'x 6'ft in the flower market by paying a lump sum amount of money. After that for everyday business, he has to pay rupees 25 to the railway authority.

The Aratdar or Middlemen buys all flowers from general traders at average market price, and then they sell the flowers to the retailers of flowers as per their requirement. The Aratdars or middlemen also sell the flowers at small wholesale market through auction-sell in the evening. Since market supplies flowers to the neighbouring states, packaging of flowers and transporting is another activity of the market. We know that Kolaghat is well connected by railways, waterways as well as roadways. From this point, market flowers are sent to the entire city and also exporting to different

parts of the country and also out of the country. For the packaging purpose, they use ice base inside the big basket made by bamboo stick and then flowers are kept into the basket. From Kolaghat, the flowers are first sent to the Mecheda and Panskura and then, from that place, flowers are transported by truck to the outside of the state. The flowers are exported to the different parts of the country like – Delhi, Bhubaneswar, Tata-Jamshedpur, Chennai etc as well as outside of the country[6].

According to the President of Kolaghat Flower Market Committee, the following problems are faced by the flower traders:

- The market was started by 50 to 60 traders at beginning, but till the date, there are near about 1500 to 2000 traders, 125 Middlemen and 35 artificial flower shops. Number of traders and middlemen has been increasing day by day, but there is no sufficient place for everyone.
- The market is built on the land of railway. The land is very low, in rainy season, the area has become muddy and the market is not covered by any shade. The people come to the market and face lots of problems during rainy season.
- There is no cold storage in Kolaghat region. When the traders were unable to sell their flowers, then the unsold flowers are treated as waste material. The unsold flowers are thrown as waste material here and there. There is no proper place for depositing unsold flowers in the market.
- As the market is built on the railway land, the railway authority takes money from the traders for their day to day business. But they are not providing minimum facility to the traders like arrangement of drinking water, toilet, shade, proper sitting arrangement, garbage place for rotten and unsold flowers. They don't get any kind of services from the government in return for the money they pay to government.
- There is no marketing information provided by any government organization. There is no inter-linkage between local flower markets as well as national and international flower market in this district. The farmers produce flowers according to the demand of auspicious ceremony (locally called lagan).
- Exploiting role of intermediaries or middle men reduces the share of profit of the flower traders.

CONCLUSIONS

Purba Medinipur district has high potential in the field of floriculture for its suitable agro-climatic condition, fertile soil, strong irrigational support, and vast agricultural land. Also, the district is well provided with the means of communication which are all the strength of this district. There is a vast opportunity of floriculture in this district. The district has a strong chance of entering the market and creating a strong position for itself in the world market because day to day business turnover of Kolaghat Flower Market in the district has a high impact on the economy of this state. Nearness to big markets like Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Mumbai etc. is a great opportunity to develop business. Some weaknesses of this district includes poor infrastructure of flower market, absence of marketing linkages, lack of cold storage for flower in Kolaghat region adjacent to the market, poor government support for the development of the market. To promote interactions and information exchanges between the floriculture community and with their information resources, there should be a good coordination among farmers, traders at the local, panchayat and block level so as to make floriculture economically sustainable as well as

profitable even under the threats of environmental hazards.

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